

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 9, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today, following your State of the Union Address, to applaud you for recognizing the importance of investing in our infrastructure and a pathway to greater prosperity. Infrastructure is the backbone of our economy. As we continue to work to resurrect our state economies and boost domestic production, we must safely and efficiently transport raw materials and energy commodities. As members of the Senate Western Caucus, representing the communities that feed and fuel our great nation and the world, we stand ready to work with you to buildout our Nation's rural infrastructure.

We must ensure that our focus is not centered solely on population-dense coasts or within urban centers. Ultimately, infrastructure through our states connects them all. As such, we have developed a set of core principles and concepts for western and rural infrastructure critical to the wellbeing of our whole nation.

- **Real money is needed to build and maintain infrastructure in a fiscally responsible way.** Nothing will be built without capital. We must ensure there is steady access and expeditious distribution of resources through established channels for rural infrastructure projects, which should include direct robust investment in the Highway Trust Fund. For rural and Western states the federal share of highway capital expenditures range from 36% to 80%, compared to the 20% average nationally.
- **Funding mechanisms should be reliable and completely offset and financing options should be feasible for rural communities.** As the nation's debt continues to escalate towards \$20 trillion, any infrastructure package which authorizes significant federal investments must also include responsible offsets.
- **Minimize administrative and overhead burdens.** The U.S. Department of Transportation, state and tribal departments of transportation, and related agencies must use their manpower efficiently and effectively, without overly cumbersome bureaucracy.
- **Expedite the review and streamline the permitting process for projects.** Whether for roads, bridges, or export terminals, excessive procedural costs and delays in the permitting process at the federal level should be expedited, minimized, eliminated, or delegated to local levels where appropriate to accelerate the timely delivery of projects. Expand categorical exclusions for environmental reviews. As you have called for, the ultimate goal for final project permitting should be under two years.
- **Reduce litigation** by modernizing the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Clean Water Act (CWA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA). Special-interest groups have increasingly used these acts to block projects and prevent access, while our manufacturing and lumber mill infrastructure suffers as a result. In order to drive down the costs of projects we must modernize or streamline these outdated laws.

- **Prioritize projects based on potential to facilitate long-term economic growth.** In recent past, taxpayer money has been wasted on shortsighted projects. Investments should be in sustainable priorities that create jobs and benefit long-term health of our economy.
- **Focus on core infrastructure projects,** not ancillary projects like highway beautification.
- **Strengthen our water infrastructure** by increasing water storage capacity, improving water supply certainty, and rehabilitating existing Bureau of Reclamation infrastructure
- **Fortify and utilize our energy assets** with an all-of-the-above strategy, allow new opportunities for hydropower, expand renewable energy on public lands, improve grid and transmission reliability, enhance pipeline infrastructure, protect utility corridors on public lands, and increase energy exports
- **Increase access to raw materials,** like critical minerals, and support American mining.
- **Deploy broadband.** Telecommunications connectivity is just as critical as physical connectivity in terms of fostering expansive economic opportunity.
- **Address maintenance backlogs** within the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Indian Health Service (IHS), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Billions of dollars of maintenance backlogs exist within these agencies and many projects are in urgent need of repair.

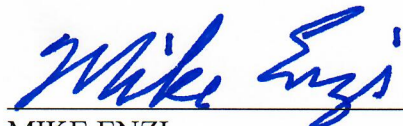
As stated in your Address, we are a nation of builders. We need to unbridle these doers and empower their work. Every federal dollar spent should be done in a fashion that leverages state, local, and private dollars to their maximum efficacy – actually building infrastructure and not burned up on bureaucratic permitting nor litigating with environmental extremists. We heed your bipartisan call and stand ready to work with you, to make our infrastructure great again.

Sincerely,



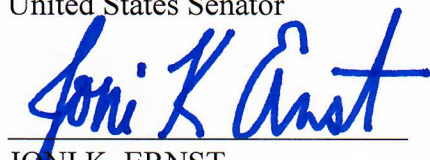
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United States Senator



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CC: Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney